MEMOIRS OF AN AMNESIAC

That Which I Am

Everyone will say to you that I am not a musician. That is correct.

From the beginning of my career, I classed myself, consecutively, among the photometrographers. My work is purely photometrical. One takes but the "Son of the Stars", or the "Pieces in the Form of a Pear", "Riding Habit", or the "Sarabandes", one perceives that no musical idea has presided at the creation of these works. It is the scientific thought which dominates.

Besides, I have more pleasure measuring a sound than I have in hearing it. The phonometer at hand, I work joyously and surely.

What have I not weighed or measured? All of Beethoven, all of Verdi, etc. It's very curious.

The first time that I used a phonoscope, I examined a B-Flat of medium size. I have never, I can assure you, seen anything more repugnant. I called in my servant to show it to him.

On my phono-scales a common (or ordinary) F-Sharp attained 93 kilograms. It emanated from a very fat tenor whom I also weighed.

Do you know the cleaning of sounds? It is rather dirty. Stretching them out is neater; to know how to classify them is very meticulous and demands a good eyesight. Here, we are in the realm of phonotechnique.

As for sound explosions, often so unpleasant, cotton, fixed in the ears, attenuates them satisfactorily for oneself. Here, we are in the realm of pyrophony.

To write my "Cold Pieces", I used a kaleidophonic recorder. That took seven minutes. I called my servant to let him hear them.

I believe one can say that phonology is superior to music. It is more varied. The financial return is also greater. I owe it my fortune.

In any case, with a motodynaphone, a mediocrely exercised phonometrologist can, easily, notate more sounds than the most skilful musician, in the same time, with the same effort. It is thanks to that I have written so much.

The future is thus with philophony.

Perfect Entourage

To live in the center of glorious works of Art is one of the greatest joys which can be felt. Among the precious monuments of human thought that the modesty of my fortune has made me choose to share my life, I will speak about a magnificent faux Rembrandt, profound and broad of execution, so good to press with the tips of the eyes, like a fatty fruit, too green

You could also see, in my workroom, a fabric of an incontestable beauty, unique object of admiration: the delicious "Portrait Attributed to an Unknown".

Have I spoken to you about my simulated Téniers? It is an adorable and sweet thing, a rare piece among all.

Are they not divine precious stones, set in hard wood? Yes?

However, that which exceeds these magisterial works; that which crushes them under the formidable weight of a genial majesty; that which makes them fade by its dazzling light? a forged manuscript of Beethoven — sublime apocryphal symphony of the master — piously bought by me, ten years ago, I believe.

Of the works of the grandiose musician, this 10th symphony, still ignored, is one of most sumptuous. The proportions are vast like a palace; the ideas are shadowy and fresh; the developments therein are precise and right.

It was necessary that this symphony existed: the number 9 could not be Beethovenian. He loved the decimal system: "I have ten fingers", explained he.

Coming to dutifully absorb this masterpiece, with their ears meditative and attentive, some, without reason, believed it an inferior conception by Beethoven, and said so. They went even farther.

Beethoven can not be inferior to himself, in no case. His technique and his form remain portentous, even in the feeble works. The rudimentary is not applicable for him. One cannot attribute a counterfeit to his artistic person.

Do you believe that an athlete, lengthily celebrated, whose force and skill were recognized by public triumphs, became inferior from the fact of easily carrying a simple bouquet of mixed tulips and jasmines? Is he less, if the assistance of a child is added to him?

You will not contradict there.

My Three Candidatures

More fortunate than I, Gustave Charpentier is a member of the Institute of France. He receives all the same the tender applauses of an old friend.

I was, three times, a candidate at the Delicate Meeting: chair of Ernest Guiraud; chair of Charles Gounod; chair of Ambroise Thomas.

Messieurs Paladilhe, Dubois & Lenepveu were, without reason of the remainder, preferred to me. And that caused me great sorrow.

Although not being very observant, it seemed to me that the Precious Members of the Academy of the Fine Arts used, toward my person, a stubbornness, a desired curling of the most calculated obstinacy. And that caused me great sorrow.

At the time of the election of Mr. Paladilhe, my friends said to me: — "Let it pass: later, he will vote for you, Master. His voice will be of a great weight." I had neither his vote, nor his voice, nor his weight. And that caused me great sorrow.

At the time of the election of Mr. Dubois, my friends said to me: — "Let it pass: later, they will be two who will vote for you, Master. Their voice will be of a great weight." I had neither their vote, nor their voice, nor their weight. And that caused me great sorrow.

I withdrew myself. Mr. Lenepveu believed that it would be of good tone to occupy a chair which was destined for me, and did not see the impropriety that there was to do it. He seated himself coldly in my place. And that caused me great sorrow.

Always with melancholy, I will remember Mr. Émile Pessard, my old Companion of battle. I could note, on several occasions, that he caught strong evil there, without any skill, missing the simpler shrewdness. *He does not know*, and one sees too much that *he does not know*. Poor good Sir! How much evil it will have to get someone a position, to thread himself through a net for him however little pleasant, for him little welcoming, for him little hospitable! Here are twenty years that I see it to be propped up with this ungrateful, with this gloomy, this sad object; while the subtle accomplices of the Palace-Mazarin regard it astonished, completely surprised of its incapable tenacity and its pale impotence.

And that causes me great sorrow.

Things of the Theatre

I always had the thought to write a lyric drama on the following and particular subject:

In that time, I occupied myself with alchemy. Alone in my laboratory, one day I rested. Outside, a leaden, livid, sinister sky: a horror!

I was sad, without knowing the reason; almost apprehensive, without knowing the cause. The idea came to me to distract myself in counting, slowly on my fingers, from one to two hundred sixty thousand.

I did it: and drew only a great boredom from it. Raising myself, I went to take a magic nut and put it, with softness, into a box of alpaca bone enriched with seven diamonds.

At once, a stuffed bird flew away; a monkey skeleton ran away; a sow skin climbed the length of the wall. Then the night came to cover the objects, to destroy the forms.

But someone knocks on the far door, that which is close to the medical talismans, talismans which were sold to me by a Polynesian maniac.

What is this? My God! do not abandon your servant. He has certainly sinned, but he repented himself. Forgive him, I beseech you.

However the door opens, opens, opens like an eye; a formless and quiet being advances, advances, advances. I no longer have a bead of sweat on my terrorized flesh; moreover, I am very thirsty, very thirsty.

In the shadow, a voice rises:

— Sir, I believe that I have double vision.

I do not know this voice. It says:

— Sir, it is me; it is indeed me.

— Who, you? I said, distressed.

— Me, your servant. I believe that I have double vision. Didn't you put, with softness, a magic nut in a box of alpaca bone enriched with seven diamonds?

Suffocating, I can not but respond:

— Yes, my friend. How do you know it?

He approaches me, gliding and dark, black in the night. I feel him tremble. Without doubt, he has fear that I do not send a rifle shot to him.

In a sob, like a small child, he murmurs:

— I saw you through the keyhole.

The Daily Life of the Musician

The artist must regulate his life.

Here the precise schedule of my daily acts:

My rising: at 7:18; inspired: from 10:23 to 11:47. I lunch at 12:11 and leave the table at 12:14.

Salutary promenade on horseback, within the ground of my park: from 13:19 to 14:53. Another inspiration: from 15:12 to 16:07.

Diverse occupations (fencing, reflections, immobility, visits, contemplation, dexterity, swimming, etc...): from 16:21 to 18:47.

Dinner is served at 19:16 and terminated at 19:20. Coming to the symphonic readings, aloud: from 20:09 to 21:59.

My bedtime is regularly at 22:37. Daily, awakening with a start at 3:19 (Tuesdays).

I eat nothing but white foods: eggs, sugar, grated bones; fat of dead animals; veal, salt, coconut, chicken cooked in white water; the mould of fruits, rice, turnips; camphorated pudding, pastry, cheese (white), cotton salad and certain fishes (without the skin).

I make my wine boil, which I drink cold with the juice of fuchsia. I have a good appetite; but I never speak while eating, for fear of strangling myself.

I breathe with care (a little at a time). I dance very rarely. While walking, I hold myself by the sides and look fixedly behind me.

Of a very serious aspect, if I laugh, it is without doing it expressly. I always excuse myself and with affability.

I do not sleep but with one eye; my slumber is very deep. My bed is round, pierced with a hole for the passage of the head. Every hour, a servant takes my temperature and gives me another.

For a long time, I have subscribed to a fashion magazine. I wear a white bonnet, white bottoms and a white waistcoat.

My doctor has always told me to smoke. He adds to his councils:

— Smoke, my friend: without that, another will smoke in your place.

Intelligence and Musical Quality in Animals

The intelligence of the animals is above all negation. But what does man do to improve the mental state of these resigned fellow-citizens? He offers to them a mediocre instruction, spaced, incomplete, such as a child would not choose for itself: and he would have reason, the dear small being. This instruction consists especially in developing the instinct of cruelty and vice which exists atavistically in individuals. There is never any question, in the programs of this teaching, neither of art, nor of literature, nor of natural science, morals, or other matters. The carrier pigeons are by no means prepared for their mission, by a use of geography; the fish are kept away from the study of oceanography; the oxen, the sheep, the calves are unaware of all the reasoned agencies of a modern abattoir, and do not know their nutritive role in the society that man has constituted for himself.

Few animals benefit from human instruction. The dog, the mule, the horse, the ass, the parrot, the blackbird and some others, are the only animals which receive a semblance of instruction. Still, it is more of an education than any other thing. Compare, I beseech you, this instruction with that given by the universities to a young human undergraduate, and you will see that it is null and that it cannot extend to facilitate knowledge which the animal will have been able to acquire by its work, by its assiduity with those. But, musically? Horses have learned to dance; spiders were held under a piano throughout the duration of a long concert, organized for them by a respected master of the keyboard. And afterwards? Nothing. Here, there, one maintains to us the musicality of the starling, the melodic memory of the crow, the harmonic ingeniousness of the owl which accompanies itself by tapping itself on the belly, purely artificial means and of thin polyphony.

As for the nightingale, always cited, its musical knowledge makes it raise its shoulders all the more ignorant of his listeners. Not only is its voice not posed, but it is informed neither of keys, nor of tonality, nor of modality, nor of measurement. Perhaps is it gifted? It is possible; it is even certain. But one can affirm that its artistic culture does not equal its natural gifts, and that this voice, of which it is shown so proud, is only a much lower and useless instrument in itself.

Recesses of my Life

The origin of the Saties goes back, perhaps, to the most remote times. Yes... On top of that, I can affirm nothing — nor unconfirm, either...

However, I suppose that this family did not appertain to the Nobility (even of the Papacy); that its members were good and modest peasants of mercy, which, formerly, was an honor and a pleasure (for the good lord of the peasant, well understood). Yes...

What the Saties did at the time of the One Hundred Years' War, I am ignorant; I have, neither, no information on their attitude and the share which they took with the Thirty Years' War (one of our more beautiful wars).

But the memory of my ancient ancestors rests in peace. Yes...

Let us pass. I will return to this subject.

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For that which regards me, I was born in Honfleur (Calvados), district of Pont-l'Evêque, on 17 May 1866... Thus I am quinquagenarian, which is a title like another.

Honfleur is a small town which sprinkles together — and in connivance — poetic floods of the Seine and those tumultuous ones of the Sleeve [English Channel]. Its inhabitants (Honfleurians) are very polished and very amiable. Yes...

I remained in this city until the age of twelve years (1878) and came to establish myself in Paris... I had an undistinguished childhood and an adolescence — without traits worthy to be reported in serious writings. Also, I shall not speak of them.

Let us pass. I will return to this subject.

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I burn with desire to give you, here, my description (enumeration of my physical particulars — those of which I can honestly speak, evidently):... Hair and eyebrows dark auburn; gray eyes (dappled, probably); covered face; long nose; medium mouth; broad chin; oval face. Height: 1 meter 67 centimetres [5 feet 6 inches].

This descriptive document goes back to 1887, the time when I made my military service to the 33rd Regiment of the Infantry in Arras (Pas-de-Calais). It could not serve me today.

I regret not showing you my fingerprints (of the digits). Yes. I do not have them on me, and these special reproductions are not beautiful to see (they resemble Vuillermoz and Laloy combined).

Let us pass. I will return to this subject.

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After a rather short adolescence, I became an ordinarily tolerable young man, nothing more. It was at this moment of my life that I commenced to think and to write musically. Yes.

Troublesome idea!... very troublesome idea! ...

Indeed, because I did not delay to make use of an unpleasant (original) originality, irrelevant, anti-French, against nature, etc...

Then, life for me was so untenable, because I was resolved to withdraw myself to my grounds and to spend my days in an ivory tower — or of another (metallic) metal.

It is thus that I acquired a taste for misanthropy; that I cultivated hypochondria; and that I was the most melancholic (leaden) of humans. I was painful to see — even with an eyeglass of controlled gold. Yes.

And all of that occurred to me through the fault of Music. This art made me more evil than good, it did: it made me quarrel with many people of quality, extremely honourable, more than distinguished, very "as it must".

Let us pass. I will return to this subject.

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Personally, I am neither good nor bad. I oscillate, may I say. Also, I never really made evil with anyone — nor good, in addition.

However, I have many enemies — faithful enemies, naturally. Why? That is because, for the majority, they do not know me — or know me only by second hand, by hearsay (by lies more than liars), in sum.

Man cannot be perfect. I wish them nothing: they are the first victims of their unconsciousness and their lack of perspicacity... Poor people! ...

Thus, I pity them.

Let us pass. I will return to this subject.